



As a strategy for rewarding and retaining early educators, this activity provided **Child Care WAGES®** salary supplements in 17 designated northeastern North Carolina counties, funded by the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant (RTT-ELC).

The Child Care WAGES® Project is a statewide education-based salary supplement initiative that provides financial awards to eligible teachers, directors, and family child care providers for each six-month commitment period that the provider stays in the same early care and education program. WAGES helps to reduce staff turnover and make the early childhood profession more affordable and attractive to providers. As a result, children benefit from more consistent, qualified educators during the early years when brain development, the establishment of trust,

Child Care WAGES®

PARTNER



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Project

"I think WAGES is a great motivator to do better... be better."

-Teacher



In the three full years of the grant (2013-2015), the annual turnover rate of WAGES participants ranged from seven to 11 percent, well below the goal of 20 percent.

What did we learn?

With increased education, retention, and compensation of childcare teachers and directors participating in WAGE\$, children had better opportunities to engage with knowledgeable and supportive adults, to build trust, and learn.

Currently, this strategy is not available to all early educators in N.C. The data are clear that salaries currently do not reflect the level of responsibility and education of those in early childhood classrooms. The Child Care WAGE\$ supplements need to be available across the state to help meet important outcomes for early educators and the children they serve. Participants and their employers in counties losing their supplements with the end of the RTT-ELC grant expressed the importance of continuation.



and the promotion of learning are most important. Higher awards are offered as more education is obtained, providing an important incentive for continued professional development.

What was accomplished?

The main goal for this project was to provide financial support for early educators that would minimize turnover and support increased continuity of care in the classroom for children. WAGE\$ provides a salary supplement that recognizes the educational attainment of the early educator, as well as the commitment to a program. Participants with degrees receive even higher awards and were thus

compensated in a manner that approaches parity with salaries in the public schools.

- Among the 17 counties, ten had historically participated in WAGE\$ using Smart Start dollars. In those counties, RTT-ELC funds enhanced the Smart Start supplement in order to make awards comparable across all 17 counties.
- During the multiple years of the grant, 810 educators received either RTT-ELC enhancements or supplements for successfully completing commitment periods in their child care programs.

Throughout the life of the grant, the project worked closely with Smart Start Partnerships in participating counties, as well as the North Carolina Partnership for Children, and the Education and Compensation Advisory Committee.

Each fiscal year, Smart Start partnerships must make difficult choices with their funding, so the availability of WAGE\$ supplements are always at risk. Of the 17 eligible RTT-ELC counties, only eight plan to participate using Smart Start dollars to continue the supplements.

Compensation for early educators is key to the successful outcomes for children and this should be considered a priority going forward.

For more information about Child Care WAGE\$, go to <http://www.childcareservices.org/wagesapps/index.php>